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THE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL TEACHER

FEBRUARY 1913

EDUCATIONAL NEWS AND EDITORIAL COMMENT

The Chicago University Dinner at the Meeting of the Department of Superintendence

In connection with the meeting of the Department of Superintendence in Philadelphia during the last week in February there will be a dinner of the former students and graduates of the University of Chicago. Placards will be posted announcing the exact time and place of this dinner. The dinner will occur on Wednesday evening. It will be the third annual event of this type. The dinner originated in imitation of the example of Teachers College which has for a number of years had a reunion of its former students and graduates at this time. The dinner of Teachers College is held on Tuesdays so that no conflict is possible between the two gatherings. All who read this notice are requested to spread the information so that the attendance at these dinners may be as large as possible.

Investigation of the School System

The Portland, Ore., public-school system is to be investigated under the direction of a special committee of five taxpayers appointed at a recent meeting. This committee is to employ educational and financial experts and is to make a report of its findings to the Board of Education. The committee was created at the annual meeting of taxpayers of school district No. 1. An appropriation of \$7,500 was made to meet the necessary expenses of the investigation. In providing for the investigation, attention was called to the fact that the disbursement of funds had increased six times in the course of

the last ten years. This large increase in expenditures seemed to the citizens of the district to justify a careful inquiry into the efficiency of the school system. The author of the resolution providing for the inquiry stated, however, that he wished to repudiate the statement made at the meeting that the resolution was intended to reflect upon the school management. The resolution merely expresses, he asserts, the conviction of its supporters that evidence of the efficiency of the school system should be presented to those who provide the funds for the maintenance of schools.

This new example of the eagerness of taxpayers to know something about the efficiency of their school system draws the attention of teachers and school officers once more to the importance of preparing to show the efficiency of their schools before the question is raised by outside agencies.

In contrast with the initiation of an inquiry by taxpayers is the example of Boise, Idaho. In that city an investigation was recently made at the invitation of the Board of Education and Superintendent by three educational experts, with the result that the school system was shown to be in sound condition in both its financial and educational organization. A number of suggestions were offered in the report of the experts, which, if accepted, will make for enlargement of the work of the school. It will probably be easier for the Board to secure these enlargements from the community because of the co-operation of those who were drawn in from the outside to consider the educational problems of the city. The taxpayers in Boise have cheerfully contributed large amounts to the maintenance of their schools. The Board of Education is undoubtedly wise in anticipating the demand of these taxpayers for evidence that the school system is doing its work efficiently.

These and other examples teach one further lesson. There ought to be some organized agencies for the examination of school systems. Committees of taxpayers and even boards of education find it difficult to secure proper co-operation from educational experts in the conduct of such examinations. If an authoritative group of experts could be organized it would make investigations of this type very much simpler to conduct and in the long run very much more productive of benefit to the school systems.

This association is made up of the citizens of New York and its immediate environs. The association employs a permanent secretary, and collects funds with which it undertakes different kinds of activity. *Bulletin No. 7*, recently issued, sets forth the different types of activity which this association will carry on during the coming year.

**The Public
Education
Association
of the City of
New York**

First, it seeks to give a full and fair hearing to the report of the School Inquiry Committee. Second, it carries on continuously investigations which throw light upon the school budget. Third, it co-operates, whenever the opportunity offers, with the public authorities. For example, two years ago, when a proposition was made for a radical revision of the New York City charter, especially that chapter dealing with the school system, this association collected and distributed a great body of information which led to the abandonment of the revision which had been projected by the mayor and others. Fourth, the association keeps a man who is technically trained in the field to study the problem of compulsory education. Fifth, it makes a study of the problem of vocational training. Last year a survey was made of the school children of two districts to find out what occupations those children entered who left school to go to work. Other related problems are also studied under this general head. Sixth, the association employed last year a trained investigator who worked with the department of ungraded classes investigating cases of mental defectives in the school. This work is directly associated with the seventh line of work, in which the association co-operates with the departments of health and charities to secure proper hygienic and moral conditions for the children in the public schools. Eighth, the association employs nine visiting teachers who carry on their work in thirteen schools. These visiting teachers deal with the cases of children who do not measure up to the school standards, but who are not truant or defective. The work of these visiting teachers is of such importance that a large number of principals in the public schools have requested that teachers be sent to their districts. Ninth, the association conducts a school for boys in the Tombs Prison. Finally, the association has established a bureau which will furnish information with regard to educational matters

to anyone in the country who asks for such information. Students of education in all parts of the country, and school officers are at liberty to take advantage of this co-operation if they wish to learn anything about the school system of New York City.

This example of public voluntary co-operation with the school system indicates the large interest which the public feels in educational matters. While the activities of this association are more varied than could be the activities of a smaller association, there is no reason why this New York example should not be followed in smaller centers throughout the United States. A careful investigation of school conditions would make it clear that in every quarter some additional activities can advantageously be taken up by co-operating organizations.

So long as the critics of the schools deal with general matters such as the course of study and the efficiency of school discipline, they are not likely to excite either the parents who
Home Study are fairly well satisfied or the teachers who know that the schools are doing good work. To be sure, there break out from time to time local storms of protest either against the new subjects, which are then designated fads, or against the old subjects, which are regarded by some as so antiquated that they ought not to be permitted. But these local storms attract little attention.

When some critic of the school system leaves these more general problems and begins to deal with the problem of home study, principals and teachers are sure to hear from interested fathers and mothers, especially from those who agree with the critics that there ought to be no home study. During the last month the newspapers have quoted freely from the recent discussions of home study in the *Ladies Home Journal*, and have expressed various opinions on the matter. It will be interesting to see how this matter is dealt with in some of the different discussions.

Thus one ex-superintendent of schools in a large eastern city is quoted by the press of Cleveland, Ohio, as saying that "little children ought never to be permitted to have home study interfere with their play." The superintendent of schools in this same city is quoted as making the following statement: "There should be

no home study in any of the lower grades. However, in the upper grades it is better that a little home work be begun to prepare the child for the high school and independent work. It is out of the question to have no home work in the high school."

The *Times* of Oklahoma City, Okla., has the following editorial:

The schools are now closed for the Christmas holidays. There would be a tremendous jolt felt by the whole futile system if, before the schools open again after the holidays, each father would convince himself of the wisdom of having his child's lessons end with school hours, just as his own business ends with office hours; in other words, that there should be no books brought home; no lessons studied in the evening. Of the physical and mental folly of evening study by a child every parent can easily satisfy himself.

In the *Daily Herald* of Quincy, Ill., there is a somewhat different expression of opinion quoted from the superintendent with approval:

It is clearly the teacher's duty to train children how to use books, how to acquire facts therefrom, and how to do school work efficiently and successfully. It is not the duty of fathers and mothers to teach their children at night for the purpose of getting them ready to recite their lessons the next day. I am opposed to any practice of so-called home work that will interfere with the child's recreation and full quota of sleep. However, I am not ready to assent that a certain amount of voluntary, judicious home work "flattens everything out into a dead level of listlessness". . . . I am not ready to concede that all home work is a waste of time and energy, and that its complete abolition is a requisite to the improvement in the education of children. I believe there is a tendency on the part of many to exaggerate the amount of home work, etc.

From other centers one might quote the opinions of physicians who have been brought into the discussion by parents or school authorities. These physicians are variously of the opinion that school work is damaging, and that school work is necessary in order to train children. Some physicians believe that home work is sure to produce all of the ills of life, while others believe that evenings can very profitably be filled by some regular work assigned by the school.

The whole matter is certainly one of great importance to school officers and parents. The time will never come when legitimate exercise of one's mental powers is not desirable after school has closed. What the exact form of this mental exercise shall be

remains to be determined by wisely directed experiment. There can be no doubt at all that the mistake has sometimes been made of requiring too much work. Sometimes the school has committed the more reprehensible mistake of requiring pupils to work out tasks for which they were not prepared. Anyone who attempts, on the basis of either one of these general charges, to make a universal statement that there shall or shall not be home study fails to recognize the real educational problem. The real educational problem is so to organize the home work of the child that it shall be productive and wholesome. Moreover, this home work should be so organized that there shall be co-operation between the home and the school. There can be no doubt at all that some children work more rapidly than others. The school cannot equalize the rate at which children move by throwing the responsibility upon the home for leveling up the work of the slow child with that of the fast child. The school must co-operate with the home in differentiating the children. In short, this problem involves all the problems of school administration and classification. The school which is called upon to do its work without any outside preparation will undoubtedly be demanding very shortly that its time be extended so that it may adequately fulfil the serious obligations which it is assuming. If individual administrators and teachers need support in the face of the public criticisms which have been scattered about very freely during the last few months, this is perhaps the strongest statement that can be made of their side of the case. The complicated problem of transmitting modern civilization cannot be solved in the short hours which are now devoted to actual school exercises. If parents object to home study, a complete reorganization of the school day and the school year is required and would be welcomed by educational officers. This would mean more and better equipment of schools and an increase in the teaching staff.

Attention was called some months ago to the fact that the state superintendent in Missouri had arranged to recognize in the schools work done at home. A blank was to be filled out by the parents indicating the different kinds of activities of the child at home, together with some statement as to the quality of this work. This blank was to be received and

**Credit for
Home Work**

signed by the teacher in the same way that the teacher's report is received and signed by the parent. There now comes from the Bureau of Education at Washington a statement to the effect that the same practice is being adopted on an extensive scale in Oregon. A number of home activities, such as building fires, milking the cow, splitting and carrying wood, dusting furniture, making beds, sewing, etc., are enumerated as the types for which credit will be given. "The work is definitely measured and allowed for. The child desiring credit for home tasks brings to school a slip signed by the parent testifying to what he has done. Ten per cent is added to the general examination result of all pupils who enter and continue in the voluntary contest to see which can obtain the most of such credits. This experiment has been tried with satisfactory results at one point in the state and is now attracting the attention of all the county superintendents."

At a meeting of the New York State Council of Elementary School Principals and Teachers, held during the recent holiday week, Principal L. V. Arnold of Amsterdam, N.Y., outlined a plan of organization which is followed in that city. There are two parallel courses, one a seven-year and the other an eight-year course. The distribution of students between these two courses is made at the end of the first year. By making this division between the students, one group can be carried forward much more rapidly than the other. The result is that at the end of two and one-half years the pupils in the seven-year course are doing the same work that those in the eight-year course do at the end of the third year. Transfers are made between the two divisions as occasion may demand. The arrangement keeps all of the pupils working at the maximum of their ability, and in many cases saves a year or more of the child's time as he progresses through the school. This plan is of special interest because it concentrates attention upon the possibility of saving time in the elementary school in the early part of the course. Teacher and parent alike are likely to overlook this possibility. The child is supposed to be progressing satisfactorily if he keeps up with his grade and the rate at which the grade is progressing is less thought of than it is

**Adjustment of
the Elementary
Course to
Individual
Pupils**

later. In the later years of the school course when the child is ready to leave school or be advanced into a higher school the question of economy comes acutely to the consciousness of school officers and parents. If the general principles of efficiency and economy can be put into operation in such a way that the lower grades will contribute their full share to the education of the children, economies in the later years of the elementary school would be much more easily effected and would probably be less urgently demanded.

Notice has been sent out by the Bureau of Education at Washington calling attention to the experiment which is being made at Ellsworth and Cokeburg, Pa., in the development of special courses of education in the schools for children who are sure to spend their lives in the mining industry. **Educating Miners** Mr. E. E. Bach has been employed by the mining companies as "sociological superintendent." He is preparing courses in elementary mining, first aid to the injured, and business forms. These courses are introduced as early as the sixth grade so that boys may be encouraged to remain in school. The girls are given courses in domestic science and other lines of work appropriate to home-making. The traditional school subjects are being modified so as to correlate with this vocational demand.

In Germany educators have long seen the importance of training the children in each community to be efficient in the industries of that community. This special experiment, therefore, has the justification of successful experience in Germany behind it. The special modification in the traditional courses undoubtedly will require much ingenuity and experimentation to perfect it. The statements which are made in the notice from the Bureau of Education would seem to indicate that the adjustments in these courses have not as yet gone very far. Thus it is reported that spelling lessons contain words taken from the state mining law, and English exercises deal with mining life. In all probability these relatively direct adaptations of the course to the interests of the community will later be supplemented by more radical adjustments of the course.

A recent court decision in Texas justifies a school teacher in administering corporal punishment. The teacher in this case was charged with assault and battery. The matter was investigated by the Board of Trustees and the trustees sustained the teacher in her action. The court now holds that the evidence is in favor of the teacher. This adds another to the long list of court decisions which constitute interesting reading for the school administrator and for the teacher.

Several speakers at educational gatherings have recently called attention to the importance of a careful consideration of the whole matter of corporal punishment. Professor Elliott, speaking before a number of associations, has reviewed the history of corporal punishment in the schools, reminding his hearers of the universal practice of the earlier schools in using the rod as an instrument of education. Professor Meeker, of Princeton, has expressed himself as distinctly in favor of the use of corporal punishment on occasion as an instrument of school discipline. In New York City, where the regulations of the Board of Education prohibit the use of corporal punishment, there have arisen grave doubts in the minds of many principals and observers of the schools whether it will not be necessary in the near future to restore corporal punishment as a means of discipline. Indeed, it is understood that among the recommendations of the committee of inquiry there will probably be reference made to the lack of control which is exhibited in some of the New York schools and the absolute necessity of re-establishing this control through vigorous means of punishment.

The medical inspector of the schools in Kansas City, Mo., calls attention to the familiar fact that the conventional school desk is in need of modification in order to produce a proper posture during sitting and studying. He suggests a chair which shall have in front of it a desk that slopes in such a way as to hold a book in front of the pupil who is reading or studying in the position in which it is usually held and at the level of the eyes. The present flat desk which lies before the pupil as he works evidently needs to be modified for a good many school activities. The problem of storing

**Corporal
Punishment**

**Suggestions
for an
Improved
School
Seating**

books and other material which is solved in the ordinary school desk by a drawer in front of the pupil is being solved in the newer experiments in school seating by placing a drawer under the seat of the chair. This makes difficult the adjustment of the seat in height, but removes the desk from in front of the child where it is not needed for most of the activities of the school.

No better evidence can be given of the public interest in educational problems than the large amount of newspaper space which is being devoted to the discussion of industrial education and its effects upon the general work of the school. The *Chicago Tribune* has been conducting during the past month a series of articles on industrial schools and their relation to the general school system. The Illinois legislature will be called upon during its present session to provide for industrial education throughout the state. In order that the opinion of all classes in regard to the best type of education may be secured, the *Tribune* has secured statements from professional educators, business men, philanthropic workers, and labor leaders.

There have been presented in these articles strong arguments in behalf of better child-labor legislation. There have been various suggestions for reforms in the elementary school. There have been pleas for prevocational courses and citations of the facts which make it clear that vocational education is necessary. It is hardly necessary to review all of these matters which are well understood by educational readers. One statement which is characteristic of a type of thinker not always heard in educational discussions may be singled out for special reference. It is the statement which was made by Mr. Edwin R. Wright on December 29. Mr. Wright is the president of the Illinois Federation of Labor and his statement presents in a very vivid way the attitude of a labor leader on the whole problem of education. He says:

The worker demands industrial education. . . . The present agitation is not the work of enthusiastic schoolmasters or of long-haired altruists. It is not even new. The great correspondence schools are not philanthropic but business institutions. For years the worker has striven to help himself to a

better understanding of his craft and to a higher wage. He desires to master the calling he expects to follow as his life-work. He knows he never will as an individual own the factory or shop or mine in which he works, but he may become foreman or even superintendent, and he is willing to work for the position.

There is much in the article which is of no immediate significance to the school officer; but a clear expression of skepticism with regard to the efficiency of present school organization appears in such passages as the following:

If I stopped here I would be classed as a common scold or a wooden-headed labor skate, but I don't propose to stop before I present the larger view generally held by the workers and try to carry their ideas to a more fitting conclusion.

Education is out of joint. We know it, and judging from the columns of space given the subject just now nearly everyone has a remedy of some kind. After 600 words of assorted gibberish, a writer in New York informs the readers of a downstate paper that the schools of Illinois are ideal. He is a schoolbook man. For him the schools are ideal.

Everything of any value must be paid for. We workers expect to pay for vocational schools, but from now on we want better value for our money. We are losing faith in politician, business man, and schoolmaster. Here in Illinois we pay a dollar a week for every child in school. Other states have just as good schools for much less money. Why so, Mr. Politician?

Without continuing to quote from this article of Mr. Wright's we may conclude that these paragraphs furnish evidence of the general interest of everyone in the problem of school efficiency.

The school of industrial arts of Trenton, N.J., is supported jointly by the state of New Jersey and the city of Trenton. Its purpose is to provide instruction for students of all ages and interests and its aim is to develop and improve the industries of the state through the training of skilled laborers in all branches of industrial art. The school offers 46 separate courses of study. These courses are conducted during the day and in the evening so as to be accessible to workers in the factories and shops in the city as well as to students who devote their whole time to study.

The institution began in the evening mechanical drawing school conducted by Joseph Crampton for ten years previous to 1898.

This evening mechanical drawing school was supported by the Board of Education. In 1897 the mayor of Trenton appointed a committee to consider plans for the enlargement of this class into an art school. On April 4, 1898, the school was opened on its present general plan. It has at the present time a large independent equipment and the variety of its courses can be seen from the following selected titles taken from its catalogue. Courses are given in: free-hand drawing, figure composition, costume designing, bookbinding, mechanical drawing, pottery painting; architectural drawing, general chemistry, applied electricity, English, millinery, applied physics, domestic art, etc.

By a combination with the State Normal School situated at Trenton, normal courses are offered to those who wish to become teachers in schools. Through this combination the school is able to issue a certificate which will be recognized by the state department of education.